

## Lucy and the snowflake

Lucy trudged down to the frozen lake and sat on the cold bench. She sighed, her breath misty in the cold winter air. *I really hate winter*, she thought. *Cold fingers and numb toes, snow and rain every day! It's been a really long one.*

She also thought bitterly about her family getting colds. *It's all winter's fault!*

The snow was beginning to come down thick and fast now, battering against her face and touching her nose. And then it stopped. It stopped so suddenly that it looked like they all disappeared. Except one. Lucy watched the beautiful snowflake meander down and land in her lap. *Make a wish Lucy* it seemed to say. So she wished. *I wish I could see the meaning of this winter.*

Whoosh! The layers of snow and rock were slowly turning invisible, revealing all the bulbs still hidden under the ground! Lucy gasped, her mouth hanging open. *The bulbs are not ready to flower yet*, whispered the snowflake. *See them sleeping? Preparation for spring.* Lucy nodded her head, and the ground closed over again. *Bulbs aren't that important*, she thought. *They are just old seeds. But they do have pretty flowers.*

Before Lucy got confused, the snowflake made the ground see-through in a different place. This time she was looking down into a mess of burrows, where little mice and moles were asleep. *They are not quite ready yet. They are still preparing for spring, when they will have children.* Lucy sucked in her breath. She was starting to understand!

The snowflake was getting impatient. *Come with me Lucy!* She followed him to the trees and crouched down beside him. Here it showed her the tree trunk, sleeping in the winter silence, waiting for spring. It showed her the inside of the tree, working hard in preparation for spring buds, its sap moving and pulsing to help it grow. It showed her the branches, with not a bud or leaf in sight, rough and bumpy beneath her fingers. It showed her the icicles, hanging in a row like beautiful Christmas decorations. She pressed her ear to the ground, and heard a humming as the seeds prepared to sprout fruit or flowers that she might eat or admire.

*Do you understand now, Lucy?* And now she smiled, because the answer was *yes*. She understood that numb fingers and cold toes were all part of the winter thrill. She respected the fact that her environment was not ready for spring, that the animals needed sleep, was grateful that the trees were working hard for the spring beauty of buds that would flower or produce fruit. She respected the simple beauty of an icicle, to the tree covered in frost after a snowstorm. And for the first time in her life, she respected and admired winter.

The end